



Wednesday, September 8th, 2021 ... Welcome back EK families!

We are SO excited to welcome students back to classes here at Earl Kitchener School for the 2021-22 school year. The last year was unusual in many ways and we know families may be feeling anxious about returning to classes. We also appreciate that families may have questions as they prepare to send children back to school and we are committed to sharing updates as we receive new information. We invite families to keep up with communications from HWDSB by [subscribing to email updates](#) or following @hwdsb on social media.

Safety is on the minds of everyone. Please know that we are taking numerous actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our classes while giving our students meaningful experiences which focus on both their physical and emotional well-being. ***Some items included here have embedded links that you can access via the posted version of this newsletter on our school website (you may need to download it).***

Some important points for families to remember as students prepare for the school year:

Attestation

Parents and caregivers are asked to complete the [one-time attestation](#) to declare that you will participate in active daily screening. The attestation can be completed in the [Parent Portal](#).

Daily COVID-19 Screening

For the time being, and unless we receive direction otherwise, students will submit confirmation of daily screening by way of a 'hard-copy' calendar that is being sent home with students. You simply initial the appropriate day/date to indicate that your child has passed the screener for that day. If a student does not have verification, they will remain in class, with a mask and distanced as much as possible from others (caregivers will be contacted to verify screening).

Mask Requirements

Masks are mandated for all students, including those in kindergarten apart from when they are outside and with their own 'cohort' (class). Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply (please complete the form in the Parent Portal if an exemption is needed).

Privacy and Immunization Status

HWDSB's immunization disclosure policy is in effect, and all schools will follow provincial guidelines regarding vaccinations requirements. As students and staff come together in schools, we remind everyone that individual health information, including vaccination status, is confidential. In order to support an inclusive and respectful school environment, we ask families to not engage in conversations around vaccination opinions or ask for vaccination status of other students, staff or teachers.

Case Management

HWDSB will continue to work with Hamilton Public Health services to confirm details related to contract tracing as well as procedures related to dismissed cohorts and closures. Information on confirmed cases of COVID-19 that involve a student or staff member in a school setting will be posted on the [COVID-19 Advisory Dashboard](#). In the interest of privacy, information will not identify the student or staff member that has received a positive COVID-19 test.

Visitors and Volunteers

Access to the school will be very limited for parents and caregivers. There will be a temporary pause on welcoming volunteers in our school as staff await more information from the Ministry of Education about how the Immunization Disclosure Policy impacts them.

Ventilation

Families may access ventilation information by following:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/about/school-renewal/ventilation/>

HVAC upgrade at Earl Kitchener

This past April, a massive project began to replace the entire existing system with a state-of-the-art mechanical ventilation, heating and cooling system. If you have been by the school you will likely have noticed that there are currently remnants of the ongoing work (e.g. bins for storage of materials, etc.). Contractors will be working after hours, with some quiet work on the roof scheduled during the day from time to time. The new system is anticipated to be fully operational by the end of September and until that time, HEPA units have been provided in all classrooms.

Making Wellness a Priority

When it comes to our students, wellness comes first. That's why we're introducing a new welcoming, inclusive initiative to help students as they return to school. [Reimagining Wellness](#) is a series of activities and lessons which address needs highlighted during school closures for COVID-19: the need for safety, routine, support, growth, community and more. Short activities covering weekly themes such as personal and collective identity, understanding and managing emotions, self-care and more will be woven into your child/ren's learning schedule.

Transportation

Parents of qualifying students will be able to confirm their transportation arrangements on the [HWSTS Transportation Portal](#). If your qualifying student **won't** be using school bus services and would like to opt-out of transportation, please follow this [opt-out](#) link to complete the Decline Transportation Form.

Loaned Device (iPad) Return

Students who still have a device from last year are asked to bring it to their educator on the first day of school, Wednesday, September 8. Please label the device with your child's name.

Remote Transition

Families requesting a **transition** between remote and in-person learning this September can do so by completing the form in the Parent Portal between September 3 and 10. Students will begin the school year in their original selection and will transition in early October.

Learn at Home Resources

[Learn at Home resources](#) support daily learning from home activities for kindergarten, primary, junior, and intermediate students in the areas of literacy, math, art and physical activities. These resources are intended to support students awaiting placement in Remote Learning and are not required materials.

Water Bottles

Drinking fountains have been bagged and will not be used. We had three 'hydration stations' installed last year (one on each floor of the school) and ask that you please be sure to send your child with a reusable water bottle (LABELLED with name please!) in order to stay hydrated.

Visiting Schools

Once again, we must significantly limit or even prohibit visitors to school, including parents, to support a safe and healthy learning environment. We ask families to call or email the school if you need to provide information or connect with a staff member. Also, we strongly recommend that no items be dropped off for students during the school day.

We will continue to share updates as we receive additional information. Thank you for your patience, and for your understanding given the current challenges of school planning while sharing in our commitment to ensuring a safe and successful school year for all!

Sincerely,

David Thorne, Lori Macnab, and all EK staff.

Earl Kitchener School

HWDSB

Curiosity. Creativity. Possibility.